

nine types. After examining them Dr. Gadow comes to the conclusion that *Loxioides* and *Psittacirostra* are Fringilline forms, and that *Acrulocercus* and *Chætoptila* belong to the Meliphagidæ, whilst the genera *Drepanis*, *Vestiaria*, *Himatione*, *Loxops*, *Chrysomitridops*, *Oreomyza*, and *Hemignathus* present common characters which enable them to be distinguished as constituting a peculiar Hawaiian family—Drepanididæ. This last-stated fact has been guessed at before, but now rests on solid grounds. Three plates are well devoted to the illustration of Dr. Gadow's anatomical researches.

It may perhaps be as well to point out that Lichtenstein's 'Verzeichniss' (referred to under *Psittacirostra psittacea*, p. 2) is a list of *duplicates*. It is consequently no argument that because species are not included in it they were therefore "presumably not in the Berlin Museum in 1823"—only that there were no duplicates of them in the Berlin Museum at that date.

XIII.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, and Obituary.*

THE following letters have been addressed to the Editor of 'The Ibis':—

Royal Zoological Museum, Dresden,
August 21st, 1891.

SIR,—It is only just now that I have discovered a misprint in my paper, "Field-Notes on the Birds of Celebes," in 'The Ibis' for 1879 (ser. 4, vol. iii. p. 130), which I am bound to correct, as it might mislead other naturalists. I there say, under the head of *Criniger aureus*, that I discovered this bird on the highest summit of the chief island of the Togian group, in the Gulf of Tomini, "about 6000 feet above the sea." It ought to be "about 1000 feet"! If such a high mountain existed on one of the islands of this group, it might induce some one to go there for a successful collection-trip. Now I will not say that it would not be well to go there for that purpose, but at any rate a mountain

of only 1000 feet does not give such a good chance as one of 6000 feet high. So far as I am aware, no naturalist has visited the Togian Islands since I was there in 1871; but these islands ought to be revisited, for I am sure that many interesting discoveries may still be made on that tropical island-group. Besides the new birds, procured in a few days, and described by Lord Walden as *Loriculus quadricolor*, *Criniger aureus*, and *Carpophaga pulchella*, a *Sauropatis* brought by me from Togian is considered by Dr. Sharpe as new, as he has lately informed me; and as I only got examples of 58 species altogether in this locality, there can be no doubt that many more, and even new ones, still remain to be discovered. I do not speak of novelties amongst other classes of animals, which would certainly be numerous.

Yours &c.,

A. B. MEYER.

Croft House, Holywood, Co. Down,
26th October, 1891.

SIR,—I suppose we may thank the gales of the last few weeks, commencing with that of the 26th September, for several uncommon bird-visitors to the North of Ireland.

A Wilson's Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) was found at Seymour Hill, near Dunmurry, Co. Antrim, on or about 1st October. I examined it in the flesh on the 3rd October. Thompson's (I believe the only previous) record of this bird in Ireland is open to question; but the species may now, without the slightest hesitation, be added to the Irish list.

Within three weeks of the gale of the 26th September I heard of or saw ten Fork-tailed Petrels (*Procellaria leucorhoa*) and one Storm-Petrel (*Procellaria pelagica*). They occurred in the counties of Derry, Antrim, and Armagh.

Within the last two weeks I have seen two Grey Phalaropes (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), one shot near Toome and one on Lough Neagh, and I have heard of two others, one shot and the other caught alive near Green Castle, Co. Donegal.

Two Black Terns (*Hydrochelidon nigra*) were shot last

week near Culmore, Co. Derry ; and on the 10th instant a Roller (*Coracias garrula*) was shot near Inch, Co. Donegal.

Yours &c.,

R. LLOYD PATTERSON.

Museum of Science and Art, Edinburgh,
November 18th, 1891.

SIR,—I had followed up my slight note on the occurrence of *Grus leucogeranus* in the Outer Hebrides (Ibis, 1891, p. 635) by the full and interesting particulars relating to its capture &c. which had been kindly furnished to me by Mr. Harvie-Brown, to whom they had been communicated by Dr. John MacRury who shot the bird.

Since then, however, Mr. E. W. Marshall, of Marlow, Bucks, has written to the 'Field' (Nov. 14th, 1891, p. 758) to inform the public that there escaped from his keeping, in August last, a bird of this species, which had been "brailed," and not pinioned in the ordinary way. This bird Mr. Marshall considers is probably identical with the one which met with its death in the far-off island of Barra, and in this opinion I entirely concur.

I must therefore request you, Sir, to withdraw my communication and to insert in its stead this letter as my further contribution to the subject. The elucidation of the truth is always a matter for congratulation, and the information which has been adduced regarding the origin of this particular specimen being in all respects satisfactory, it affords me pleasure to make it known to you.

Yours &c.,

WM. EAGLE CLARKE.

The College, Durham,
1st December, 1891.

SIR,—An expression in your notice of a memoir by Dr. Koenig on the ornithology of the Canaries, in your last number, seems to call for a word from me.

I had not seen nor heard of this memoir till I saw your notice ; and, now that I have read the attack upon myself, I

should have passed it over in silence had it not been for your note, for I am loth to waste time and paper on such a petty personal matter. My intercourse with Dr. Koenig was very slight. I called on him twice, and saw him for a few minutes on each occasion. He returned my first call when I was out. This was the whole of our acquaintance. When I visited him after his return from Palma my chief object was to caution him about an imposition that had been practised on him, a neotropical Owl-skin (*Glaucidium siju*), the history of which I knew, having been palmed off upon him as shot in Teneriffe*. He showed me what he got in Palma. I saw examples of *Columba laurivora*, which I well knew to exist in that island, my friend Capt. Kent having shot several there three years before. I observed, "Why you told Mr. Meade Waldo that *C. livia* was the only Pigeon to be found in Palma!" He stammered out some excuse, and told me he had found a new Robin and a new Finch. I simply replied, "Oh! they are only varieties. Mr. Waldo tried to make a new species of the Gomera Robin, but it would not do." As to the rivalry which your review suggests, the idea is too absurd. Mr. Meade Waldo and I had been ransacking the islands for two years, and Mr. Meade Waldo is an excellent Spanish scholar, while Dr. Koenig does not speak the language. In conclusion I must express regret that the editor of a journal of such repute as the 'Journal für Ornithologie' should have condescended to exhibit such petty international jealousy as is shown in his editorial note.

Yours &c.,

H. B. TRISTRAM.

7 Radnor Place, Hyde Park, W.,
3rd Dec., 1891.

SIR,—Owing to unusually stormy weather during the past autumn, and especially to the prevalence of gales more or less from the westward, an unusual number of irregular visitors have been noticed on the coasts of the United Kingdom. For instance, Wilson's Petrel (*Oceanites oceanica*)

* See editorial remarks, 'Ibis,' 1891, p. 616.

is a species which loves the open sea, and never willingly enters so much as a bay or an estuary; yet one example has been obtained in Co. Down and another on Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh—the first recorded occurrences in Ireland; while Mr. Henry Evans informs me of one obtained on the island of Jura—the first in Scotland, I believe. As for the Fork-tailed or Leach's Petrel (*Procellaria leucorrhoa*), Mr. Williams, of Dublin, had received twenty-seven specimens between Sept. 28th and Oct. 9th, while many others are chronicled from various places. Manx Shearwaters (*Puffinus anglorum*) also have been more frequent inland than is customary, even in autumn. At least three examples of *Xema sabinii* have been obtained, and one of these, sent for my inspection by Mr. R. E. Coles from Lymington, Hants, is a fully adult bird, only two such being previously known to me as having occurred in the British Islands. There has also been a great arrival of Grey Phalaropes, and, coincidently with the presence of some of the largest flocks of this species, a considerable number of the Long-tailed or Buffon's Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) have been noticed, upon which I propose to make a few remarks.

On 20th October a Long-tailed Skua was captured on some flooded meadows near Christchurch, Hants, and shortly afterwards forwarded to the Zoological Society by Mr. Edward Hart—the first time the species had ever been represented in the Society's Gardens, where I inspected it a few days later. In a letter addressed to Mr. Selater, dated 8th Nov., Mr. Hart gives some interesting details, from which it appears that on the 21st October he obtained two more living examples; while at different times he observed numbers, five being on view at once, and over twenty were killed in Hampshire. The greater number of these were adult birds, but most of them had moulted their long tail-feathers, though some still retained them, in a worn condition. A few days later all these Skuas had left. Through Mr. W. B. Tegetmeier, the British Museum received a specimen of Buffon's Skua from Worcestershire and another from Ilfracombe in Devonshire, both of which I have examined, one

of these having the long tail-streamers. The Rev. H. A. Macpherson informs me that about two dozen adults and birds "in change" have been killed between Walney Island and the Solway Firth. Dr. E. A. S. Elliot writes to me from Kingsbridge, South Devon, that a dozen examples have been obtained in that neighbourhood. Many of these Skuas appear to have been quite exhausted, and their stomachs to have been empty. Judging from the specimens I have seen, I am inclined to think that the late Mr. Gould was to some extent right in his supposition ('B. of Gt. Britain,' v.) regarding the autumn plumage of the adults. I believe that birds which are so far adult as to have bred during the previous season may assume a few new grey-tipped feathers on the back at least during the autumn; in other words, that they "go back" a little. They *may* even get barred feathers on the flanks and under tail-coverts; though I doubt it, for the Mevagissey example, upon which Gould based his belief of this, is before me, and is clearly an immature bird, which would not have bred till the following season. But I expect that these traces of reversion cease as soon as the birds become really mature.

As regards distinctions between immature examples of the Long-tailed Skua and the Arctic or Richardson's Skua (*S. crepidatus*), I have tried in vain to find any quicker and readier test than that afforded by the shafts of the primaries. In the Long-tailed Skua the two outer ones are bright ivory-white, the third is generally dusky, and the rest are distinctly brownish all the way, unless rubbed; whereas in the Arctic Skua *all* the shafts are *white* for the greater part of their length, and are only dusky near the tips. Now and then comes "a teaser," but not often; there is an adult in the British Museum, which I am somewhat inclined to consider may be a hybrid. When the shaft-test is not a success, then other evidence must be brought to bear, but it usually suffices. In the 4th ed. of 'Yarrell,' iii. p. 678, I unfortunately made the slip of inserting the distinction for the Long-tailed under the Arctic Skua; and although this was speedily corrected in the errata, and also in a special para-

graph in the preface, yet it is continually being brought up against me, for few people refer to errata or read prefaces!

An excellent ornithologist has recently expressed to me his dissatisfaction with the term "Arctic" Skua for *S. crepidatus*, because, he says, a bird which breeds in Scotland is not Arctic. I should be glad of any better name (for Richardson's Skua is unsatisfactory), but if a bird which goes at least up to 82° N. lat. and probably further is not Arctic, pray what is?

Yours &c.,

HOWARD SAUNDERS.

The Bird-Gallery in the British Museum.—No one interested in the progress of ornithology should omit to visit the Bird-gallery in the British Museum and see the grand reform that has been commenced there. The division appropriated to the Woodpeckers has been cleared of all the numerous uniformly mounted specimens which formerly crowded its shelves, and now contains a small series of well-mounted specimens selected to show the principal variations in this family of birds. Examples of the giant *Campophilus imperialis* and the minute *Picumnus undulatus* show the extreme range, as regards size, in the Woodpeckers. Other specimens represent the three subfamilies (Picinæ, Picumninæ, Iynginæ) in which these birds are arranged in Mr. Hargitt's recently-published catalogue, and besides these many of the leading genera are exemplified. Specimens of nests and eggs show the mode of nidification of the Picidæ, and diagrams and special mounted parts point out the peculiarities that distinguish the Woodpeckers from other birds and the various groups of Woodpeckers from each other. To every specimen is attached a small map to show the distribution of the species. In short, we have before us a complete and instructive epitome of the group, presented to us in an intelligible way, instead of a mass of individual specimens from which it is hardly possible to derive any instruction at all.

On behalf of ornithologists generally, we venture to express a hope that this much-needed reform will be continued

through the entire gallery. As is well known to us all, the collection of skins in cabinets (stated now to be some 300,000 in number) is in these days always resorted to by the working student. The gallery is seldom referred to except for the purpose of examining old types, which, if the new system is carried out, will be dismantled and placed in the cabinets. Under these circumstances the best use that can be made of the gallery is to convert it into an Index-Museum, wherein may be exhibited a complete series of the leading forms of bird-life arranged in systematic order. This, we take it, is the leading idea of the authorities in the alteration recently effected, and will, we are sure, meet with hearty approval from members of the B. O. U., as well as from the ordinary visitor, who wishes to get a general idea of Birds and their variations.

The Bird-Collections in the Oxford University Museum.— Having recently paid a short visit to Oxford, I took the opportunity of examining the collection of birds in the University Museum, and have come to the conclusion that it is not in a very satisfactory state. It is unfortunate that there seems to be no one now at Oxford who cares for the science of ornithology. The residents of one of the most convenient places in the world for a scientific student have not even one ornithologist amongst them to look after the collection and to keep it up to the mark. I venture to offer a few remarks on its present condition. There are, at present, three series of mounted specimens of birds in the Oxford University Museum.

(1) The general series in the Great Hall. This is contained in twelve cases, placed in opposite rows of six each, but rather mixed up with mammals, shells, and other objects. The specimens are arranged according to Gray's 'Genera,' and mostly correctly named; but many of them are in bad order and miserably set up, and should be replaced by fresh specimens. The whole series requires renovation and rearrangement according to some modern system, and the "Orders" and "Families" should be designated by labels and distinctly separated one from another.

(2) The collection of Arctic birds formed by Mr. J. Barrow, F.R.S., and presented to the Museum by that gentleman. This interesting collection, which has been well described by Mr. Harting (P. Z. S. 1871, p. 110), is placed in the gallery. It is well mounted and correctly named. But it is a question whether it is desirable to keep it apart from the general series.

(3) The British series, also placed in the gallery, which is in fair order, although it also requires revision and rearrangement according to some modern system. It ought not to be difficult to find some member of the B. O. U. to undertake this task, provided that the authorities will allow him a "free hand."

Besides the mounted specimens there are, as I understand, a large number of skins of birds, mostly "put away" in boxes in various parts of the building. Of these the only portion I was able to see was the collection formed by Mr. W. H. Treacher in Borneo, and partly described by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe in 1879 (see *Ibis*, 1879, p. 233). This is placed in some drawers in the main hall. The other collections are stated to be "boxed up," and kept partly in a room on the ground-floor and partly in some "upper chamber," to which no ready access is possible.

I venture to suggest that one of the side rooms on the ground-floor should be cleared of its heterogeneous contents and devoted to the bird-skins, to be arranged here in cabinets, so as to be accessible to the ornithologist. It is hardly right for a great and rich University to accept collections of birds from those who, in the words of Bonaparte, put forward on a similar occasion, "*croyants qu'ils travaillaient pour la Science, n'ont travaillé que pour les mites*"*.

* Some remarks nearly similar to these were published in '*Nature*' for October 1st, 1891. I am much pleased to hear that they have attracted attention, and that the rearrangement and improvement of the collections of birds, as well as of other objects in the Museum, are occupying the attention of the University authorities.—P. L. S.

Summer Migrants at Fort Simpson.—Mr. R. G. McConnell, in his Report on his expedition of 1887–88 in the Mackenzie and Yukon districts of the North-west of Canada, gives the following notes on the arrivals of summer migrants at Fort Simpson, at the junction of the Liard and Mackenzie rivers (62° N. lat.) :—

“The warm weather which commenced on the 1st of May continued throughout the month, and under its influence the snow quickly disappeared, and the spring advanced with astonishing rapidity. On the 20th of April, the first day the temperature rose above freezing-point for nearly six months, the Barking Crow (*Corvus americanus*) made its appearance. The Raven (*Corvus corax*) had remained throughout the winter. On the 1st of May some Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) were seen at the edge of an open place in the river, accompanied by a flock of Mergansers and other Ducks. The 4th brought the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) and some Sparrows, and on the 5th the Wavies (*Anser hyperboreus*), which usually lag a few days in the rear of the Canada Geese, commenced to wing their way northwards, and in a couple of days were passing in such numbers that flocks were rarely out of sight. The first Goose was shot at the fort on the 5th, the successful marksman receiving, according to immemorial custom at the Hudson’s Bay establishments, a present of a pound each of the two luxuries of the country, tea and tobacco. By the 10th the ground was bare in many places, and such late birds as the Swallow and Plover had arrived.”

Obituary.—AUGUST VON PELZELN ; THOMAS W. BLAKISTON ; F. W. MEVES.

AUGUST, EDLER VON PELZELN*, was born at Prague, on the 10th of March, 1825, the son of Joseph von Pelzeln and his wife, who was a daughter of the famous writer, Caroline Pichler. Soon after the birth of August, the family moved to Vienna, where the father died.

* Mostly translated from a notice in ‘Die Schwalbe,’ xv. p. 237 (Nov. 1st, 1891).

August von Pelzeln was devoted to Natural History from his earliest youth, and at first much interested in Entomology. After completing his University studies, it was his earnest wish to obtain a place in the Imperial Cabinet of Natural History; but, as there seemed no chance of such an opening, he determined to study law, and after passing the necessary examinations, was admitted to practise in the Vienna Courts. In the beginning of 1851, however, an opportunity presented itself of obtaining a subordinate place in the Museum. This was as assistant to Dr. C. Diesing, who was gradually losing his eyesight. Here he had excellent opportunities of indulging his taste for Natural History, being engaged in writing out from dictation the results of Diesing's work, and in making microscopical observations for him. Pelzeln remained Diesing's trusty assistant and amanuensis until the death of the latter in 1867.

In 1852, upon the death of Heckel, Pelzeln took over the care of the collection of birds, and in 1869 that of the mammals, of the Imperial Collection, and did much for the enrichment of both these Departments. In 1857 he became Custos-Adjunct, and in 1869 Custos.

In 1883 Pelzeln's sight began to fail him, and the evil increased for several years, during which, however, he accomplished the transference of the Collections into the new Natural-History Museum-Building in the Ringstrasse. The malady still increased, so that in 1888, after thirty-seven years' service to the State, during which he had never taken a rest, he was obliged to ask for his retirement, and on this occasion received the decoration of the Ritterkreuz of the Order of Franz-Joseph. Although Pelzeln retired from the Museum at this period, he continued to work as much as possible in his own branch of science. He assisted in the management of the Ornithological Union of Vienna, and resumed, along with Herr Pallisch, the editorship of 'Die Schwalbe,' the organ of that Association, in which he had taken part in former years. In addition to his bad eyesight, a malady in the feet supervened, which carried him off on the 2nd of September of last year.

A. von Pelzeln was never married, but lived a domestic life with his two sisters. He was highly appreciated by his colleagues, and well known for his quiet, benevolent, and religious disposition. Of him it may be truly said that he never had an enemy.

The publications of our deceased Honorary Member were, as is well known to us, very numerous. It is unnecessary to give a complete list of them, but Herr von Pelzeln's name will ever be known to ornithologists as the author of an excellent account of Johann Natterer's great Collection of Birds made in Brazil from 1817–1835. This was published in 1871 under the title '*Zur Ornithologie Brasiliens.*'

Other well-known works of Pelzeln are his volume on the Birds of the Novara-Expedition, and his '*Ornis Vindobonensis.*' His minor ornithological memoirs were published mostly in the '*Verhandlungen*' of the Zoological and Botanical Society of Vienna, of which he was one of the founders, in the '*Sitzungsberichte*' of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of Vienna, in the '*Journal für Ornithologie*,' and in this Journal.

Pelzeln was a member of most of the leading ornithological Societies of Europe and America. He was elected an Honorary Member of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1869. Those of us who have had the pleasure of personal intercourse with him will be unanimous in lamenting the loss of a sincere friend and excellent correspondent. No one who addressed inquiries to the Custos of the well-known Vienna Collection of Birds ever failed to receive an immediate and satisfactory reply, and every possible assistance in his work.

CAPTAIN THOMAS WRIGHT BLAKISTON, late R.A.—It is with much regret that we have to announce the death, in New Mexico, on the 17th of October last, of Captain Blakiston, to whom we are indebted for so much of our knowledge of Japanese Ornithology. Captain Blakiston, who was born in 1832, belonged to an old Durham family, and, after passing through Woolwich, obtained a commission in the Royal Artillery. In 1861 he wrote a very interesting paper for this Journal on a collection of birds which he had made

in North-west Canada, and in the following year he published a narrative of his adventurous expeditions up the river Yangtsze, for which he received the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society. He then settled at Hakodadi, in the north island of Japan, and devoted much attention to the Birds of Yesso, discovering many new species, writing various papers which appeared in this Journal, the '*Chrysanthemum*,' and the '*Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*,' and sending small collections of new or rare birds to Mr. Swinhoe, and, after the death of that distinguished ornithologist, to Mr. Seeböhm. In conjunction with Mr. Harry Pryer of Yokohama, Captain Blakiston succeeded in adding more than a hundred species of birds to the avifauna of Japan. A few years ago Captain Blakiston removed from Hakodadi to the United States, and took up his residence at London in Ohio, and quite lately, we believe, in New Mexico. His last ornithological paper was an essay on the "*Water-Birds of Japan*," published in the '*Proceedings of the United States National Museum*.'

FRIEDRICH WILHELM MEVES, or WILHELM MEVES (as he always signed himself), who died suddenly at Stockholm on the 9th of April last, the son of a Pastor, was born at Dellingsen, in the Duchy of Brunswick, on the 14th April, 1814. With him, as with many other celebrated naturalists, the taste for natural history was developed at a very early age, for when only eleven years old he commenced to form a collection of birds. When Meves was only thirteen years of age he lost his father, and was adopted by an uncle, Pastor Luder. Two years later he was apprenticed to a chemist. In 1840 he went to Kiel, where he entered the University as a student, and soon obtained an appointment in the Kiel Museum. Here he became acquainted with Fr. Boie, in whom he found a firm friend. Professor Sundevall visited Kiel in 1841, and having formed a high opinion of Meves's talents as a naturalist, and especially as a skilful taxidermist, offered him the post of "*Conservator*" at the Stockholm Museum, which was accepted in 1842. At Stockholm Meves remained and worked, until he was pen-

sioned in 1877. During his service at Stockholm, Meves visited many parts of Sweden, from Skåne up to Lapland, also Northern Russia, the Ural, &c., for the purpose of collecting birds and eggs. He also published many interesting records of his observations.

Meves's chief aim was to form, for the Stockholm Museum, a perfect collection of Palearctic birds in all the various plumages, from the nestling upwards, and in this object he was eminently successful. When, on giving up his appointment at the Museum, he could no longer continue this pursuit, he commenced forming a Palearctic collection of Lepidoptera, and his collection of these objects is said to be one of the best in private hands. This collection he left to the Stockholm Museum, having also, previously to his retirement in 1877, presented to the same institution a very large collection of Palearctic eggs, which he had formed. Meves married, in 1844, a daughter of Karl Lappe, the poet, who died last year, and having had no children, adopted a nephew, who is now in the Swedish Government service.

In person Meves was strongly built, of medium height, with a heavy shock of grizzled hair, a large grey beard, and a pleasant open expression of countenance. As a field-naturalist and a collector he was excellent, and as a taxidermist, especially in the preparation of birds in down, few could equal him.

Although he commenced his researches in Natural History so early in life, Meves did not publish anything until he reached middle age; his first article, that on the change of colour in birds without and irrespective of moulting, was published in 1854. Since then he has written many articles, which have chiefly appeared in the '*Öfversigt af K. Vetenskaps-Akademiens Förhandlingar*,' and in the '*Journal für Ornithologie*.' Amongst these we may specially mention his various memoirs on the birds of Sweden, and his ornithological observations in North-west Russia. To him also the credit is due of having described the mode in which the "bleating" of the Snipe is produced (*cf.* P. Z. S. 1858, p. 199).